

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS RANGOON 001211

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#) [BG](#) [IN](#) [UNHCR](#)

SUBJECT: ROHINGYA REFUGEE UPDATE

1. (SBU) Summary: The Government of Burma has unofficially told UNHCR that it would accept 5,000 of the remaining 22,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. That would leave a residual 17,000 people in Bangladesh to be locally settled or otherwise accommodated. UNHCR Rohingya repatriation assistance will cease as of June 30, 2003. 40,000 potential asylum seekers from Burma's Chin state are presently in India's Mizoram state. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Hitoshi Mise, the UNHCR's deputy director for the EAP region, briefed the diplomatic corps in Rangoon June 18 on his discussions with the GOB about Rohingya refugees. Mise said he found the Deputy Minister of Immigration "unusually flexible" and secured GOB agreement on three logistical issues regarding Rohingya refugee repatriation. The Deputy Minister, speaking off the record, told UNHCR that the GOB would consider accepting up to 5,000 of the 22,000 refugees still in Bangladesh.

3. (SBU) Mise noted that this would leave some 17,000 Rohingyas in Bangladesh. He said UNHCR might have to re-verify their refugee status, as many of the individuals left Burma in 1991 or 1992. Local settlement in Bangladesh might be a likely prospect for the residual 17,000, Mise mused aloud, while noting he planned to travel to Dhaka shortly to discuss these issues with the Government of Bangladesh.

4. (SBU) The governments of Burma and Bangladesh have agreed that UNHCR repatriation assistance to Rohingya refugees would cease on June 30, 2003, Mise reported. UNHCR reps added that the resettlement assistance programs for the 232,000 returned Rohingya refugees would continue beyond that date.

5. (SBU) UNHCR representatives at the briefing reported that some 40,000 dislocated people from Chin state are currently in Mizoram. As the UNHCR has no presence in Mizoram (individuals seeking refugee status must apply in New Delhi) and with the Mizo/Zomi ethnic group straddling the India - Burma border, Mise said it is very difficult for these folks to establish refugee status. Resident UNHCR head Rajiv Kapur commented that the numbers of Burmese applying for refugee status in New Delhi are small but growing (about 700 over the last three months). He also commented that the official residence of Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes is currently being used to house large numbers of displaced Burmese.